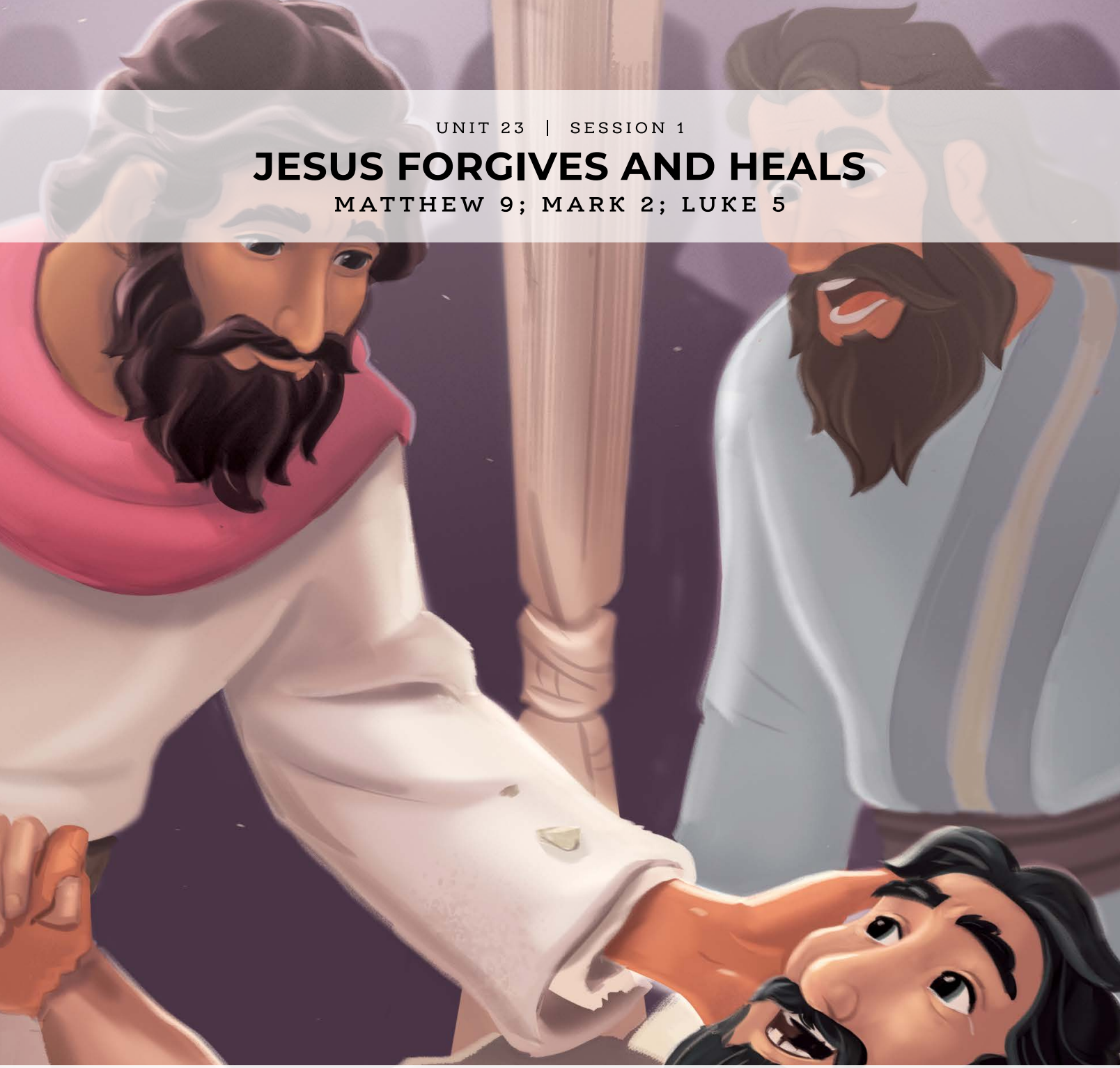
UNIT 23 | SESSION 1

JESUS FORGIVES AND HEALS

MATTHEW 9; MARK 2; LUKE 5



KEY PASSAGE: Matthew 5:16

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: *What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom. He taught that all Scripture is about Him.*

CHRIST CONNECTION: By forgiving the man's sins, Jesus revealed that He is God. Jesus has power to heal and forgive. Only through faith in Jesus can people be saved from their sins.

STORY POINT: Jesus showed His power by forgiving sin.

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PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

Jesus posed an intriguing question in today's passage: "Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat, and walk'?" We're presented with quite a few crises in this story: a man suffering from paralysis was carried into Jesus' presence by his friends, the house was too crowded to allow new guests, and the Jewish leaders watched it all unfold with cynical hearts. It appeared to be a lose-lose situation from every angle. As Jesus kept teaching, the men devised a plan to get their friend to the Healer while the scribes and Pharisees continued to cry blasphemy in their hearts.

Yet Jesus was demonstrating this truth to every person involved: He alone has the power to forgive sin. In this scriptural account, we see Jesus' authority—His power, ability, and willingness to intervene in the lives of God's people through their faith. Though the religious leaders in the crowd were unable to see the state of the paralyzed man's heart, they could witness Christ's power to physically heal.

When Jesus saw the friends' desperate, inventive, and faith-fueled means of bringing their friend to Him, He extended forgiveness to the man. However, Jesus' forgiveness was viewed as an overstepping of authority. After all, the Jews knew that only God has the right to forgive sins. The scribes and Pharisees believed it would be more difficult for Jesus to forgive the man than to heal him. To prove His power to accomplish both, Jesus extended forgiveness and physical healing to the man in need.

Jesus meets the needs of the humble and lowly. He recognized the faith of the men who took such a great risk to deliver their friend at His feet. They believed they could boldly approach the one with the power to heal.

Lead the boys and girls in your class this week to see that the Jesus in this story is the same Lord who desires to forgive their sins today! Ask the Lord to go before you as you bring children to Him by teaching them His Word. May they trust in Him by faith, believing in His authority and desire to heal and save them also.

PREPARE
THE WEEK PRIOR
Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session

WELCOME
10–15 MINUTES
Greet kids and open the session

LEARN
25–30 MINUTES
Teach kids the story of the gospel

LOVE
15–20 MINUTES
Lead kids to love the God of the gospel

LIVE
15–20 MINUTES
Lead kids to live out the mission of the gospel

The Gospel Project Podcast

Scan the QR code to listen to The Gospel Project for Kids Weekly Leader Training Podcast.

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PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.

WELCOME

Activity Page
- ☐ "Mat Maze" activity page

Session Starter (Option 2)
- ☐ cones or chairs
- ☐ beach ball

LEARN

Introduce the Session
- ☐ countdown video
- ☐ Story Point Poster

Big Picture Question
- ☐ Big Picture Question Poster

Review the Timeline
- ☐ Giant Timeline

Tell the Bible Story
- ☐ "Jesus Forgives and Heals" video
- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster
- ☐ mat, 1 per kid (optional)

Questions from Kids
- ☐ "Unit 23, Session 1" Questions from Kids video

Missions Moment
- ☐ "Apostle of the Amazon" video

Key Passage Activity
- ☐ Key Passage Poster
- ☐ beach ball
- ☐ "Shine (Matthew 5:16)" song
- ☐ worship song of your choice (optional)

LOVE

Review & Bible Skills
- ☐ Small Group Timeline and Map Set (optional)

LIVE

Activity Choice (Option 1)
- ☐ painter's tape

Reflection and Prayer
- ☐ Bible story coloring page

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WELCOME

WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

> **SAY** *What is the largest crowd you've ever been in? How did it feel to be around that many people?*

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the "Mat Maze" activity page.

> **SAY** *By following the maze, you discovered that Jesus has the power to forgive sins. We will explore this in today's story as we learn how Jesus showed His power by forgiving a paralyzed man.*

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

☐ OPTION 1: TURTLE TAG

LOW PREP

Invite the kids to spread out around the game area. Select one kid to be the *tagger*; everyone else is a turtle. Instruct the kids to crawl on all fours, like a turtle. The tagger must attempt to crawl after and tag his or her classmates. When someone is tagged, they must stay still and tuck their arms and legs in like a turtle closing up in its shell. To rejoin the game, they must be tagged on each shoulder by another turtle. Once they rejoin the game, if they get tagged a second time, they also become a tagger. Continue the round until one turtle is left.

> **SAY** *You were terrific turtles! With the help of your classmates, you could get back in the game. Did you know that Jesus helped a man who couldn't walk? Today we will learn that* **JESUS SHOWED HIS POWER BY FORGIVING SIN.**

☐ OPTION 2: UP AND OVER

Arrange a large space with cones or chairs set up to create a line across the center. Separate the kids into two teams. Have the teams sit down on either side of the line. Begin by tossing the beach ball to one side. Explain that the kids must bump the ball up and over to the other team. The kids may hit the ball with their hands, heads, and legs, but their bottoms may not come off the ground. Only allow three hits per team to get the ball across the line. If they don't get the ball across the line in three hits, or if the ball touches the ground before that, the other side gets a point. Continue play until a certain number points.

> **SAY** *You worked with your teammates to help get the ball over the line. We are going to read about some friends who helped a man who couldn't walk. Let's see how* **JESUS SHOWED HIS POWER BY FORGIVING SIN.**

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**

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INTRODUCE the Bible Story

1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

> **SAY** *Hi, kids! I'm so glad you're here! My name is* ***[your name]****, and today we will be reading a story that can be found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. These three tellings of Jesus' ministry share lots of similarities! If you brought your Bible with you to church, please take it out and place it in your lap.* ***[Distribute a Bible to any kid who needs one.]*** *Together we have learned that Jesus showed His care by healing people. Today we will learn that* **JESUS SHOWED HIS POWER BY FORGIVING SIN.** *Let's pray together before we open God's Word. 'Thank You, God, for sending Jesus to forgive our sins. Open our hearts and minds as we read from Your Word today. Amen.'*

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

> **SAY** *Today we will be learning a new big picture question and answer together. In our last big picture question, we learned that Jesus' miracles revealed that He is the Son of God. Jesus healed and showed the great care God has for people. But Jesus didn't come just to heal; He also come to teach. Our new big picture question is:* **What did Jesus teach when He was on earth?** *The answer we will be memorizing is* **Jesus taught about God and His kingdom. He taught that all Scripture is about Him.** *Not only does Jesus have the power to heal people's bodies, He has the power to forgive sins. Let's learn more about Jesus' teaching through today's story.*

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the Giant Timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

> **SAY** *Jesus healed and cast out unclean spirits. Through His great miracles, He showed compassion for the broken and the outcast. Jesus taught with authority and power that could only come from God. As news about Jesus continued to spread, people came from all over to be healed by Him. But Jesus taught that He hadn't come to only heal diseases or perform wonders. Today, we will learn that Jesus also came to forgive sins.*

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LEARN the Bible Story

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Matthew 9; Mark 2; Luke 5. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video "Jesus Forgives and Heals." Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

JESUS FORGIVES AND HEALS

"**Jesus returned to Capernaum, and** *news spread that He was back in town. So* **many people gathered to hear Jesus teach God's Word**, *that there was no more room in the house*.

While Jesus was teaching, four men came to the house carrying a paralyzed man on a stretcher. But the men could not bring their friend to Jesus because of the crowd.

So, they carried the paralyzed man up to the roof and dug a hole through the roof. *They lowered the mat on which the man was lying through the roof.* **Jesus saw their faith, and said to the paralytic man, "Son, your sins are forgiven."**

But some of the religious leaders heard this, and they thought to themselves, "Why would Jesus say this? Doesn't He know that no one can forgive sins but God?"

Jesus knew what these leaders were thinking. He said, "Why are you thinking these things to yourself? Which is easier to say to this paralyzed man? 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat, and walk'?"

Then, to show that He had the power to heal and to forgive sins, **Jesus turned to the man and said, "I tell you, get up, take your mat, and go home."**

Immediately the man got up, picked up his mat, and left in front of everyone. The people were amazed and gave glory to God, *saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"*

Christ Connection: By forgiving the man's sins, Jesus revealed that He is God. Jesus has power to heal and forgive. Only through faith in Jesus can people be saved from their sins."

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY "*Jesus continued to fulfill God's will by teaching people about His Word. News of Jesus' miracles had spread, and many people, like this paralyzed man, were coming to Him. Though the man couldn't walk, his friends did not let this stop them. They demonstrated great faith in Jesus' power to heal their friend. What did Jesus say when He saw the faith of the man's friends?* **[Allow responses.]** *By telling the man that His sins were forgiven, Jesus was claiming to do something only God*

STORYTELLING TIPS

Set the scene: Provide each kid with a mat like the paralytic man used. Invite the class to sit on the mats as you read the story.

Use emotion: As you tell the story, change the tone and volume of your voice when something surprising or amazing happens, or when different people are speaking.

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has the power and authority to do. This shocked the religious leaders. They thought that Jesus was dishonoring God with His claim. But Jesus knew their thoughts because He is God. He is all-knowing!

What question did Jesus ask the religious leaders? **[Allow responses.]** *Jesus' question further revealed His authority as the Son of God. Physical healing can often be seen with our eyes. But forgiveness from sin is something that happens in our hearts. Jesus proved His power by healing the paralytic man in a way that others could see, but forgiving the man's sins revealed something deeper. Only God can forgive sins. By asking this question and healing the man, Jesus demonstrated that He is God. He has the power to both heal and forgive sins. By forgiving the man's sins, Jesus revealed that He is God. Only through faith in Jesus can people be saved from their sins.* ”

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

SAY “ *Like the paralyzed man, we are stuck in our sin. But God sent His Son Jesus to pay the penalty for our sins through His death on the cross. Jesus has the power to forgive our sins. To learn more about what it means to trust your life to Jesus, you can talk to one of your parents or a church leader.* ”

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.)

4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 23, Session 1” Questions from Kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. What is the best way to make a friend and keep a friend for life? What does the Bible say about friends?
2. How can you help lead your friends to Jesus this week?

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5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

> **SAY** *“Erik Alfred Nelson was born December 17, 1862 in Sweden. When he was seven years old, his father, who was a minister, moved the family to the United States to escape religious persecution in their own country. They settled in Chanute, Kansas, with other Swedish immigrants.”*

Show the “Apostle of the Amazon” video.

Mention that Erik became a Christian when he was 14 years old. Throughout his childhood and teenage years, he worked on his father’s farm. Later, he became a cowboy and traveled extensively. In his twenties, he returned to Kansas and began to study the Bible.

W.B. Bagby, a missionary in Brazil, had written a letter that inspired Erik to want to go to Brazil. In 1891, when Erik was 29 years old, he sailed out for Brazil. He married Ida Lundberg, and she joined him in Brazil. Erik and Ida served together as missionaries, starting churches, giving out Bibles, and teaching people about Jesus. In addition to her missionary service, Ida also sewed for a living. People called Erik “The Apostle of the Amazon.” Ida and Erik’s total service in Brazil as missionaries was 48 years.

Pray, thanking God for missionaries who bravely go to other places to tell people about Jesus. Thank God for the work of the Nelsons in Brazil.

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Show the Key Passage Poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Matthew 5:16 together.

> **SAY** *“Jesus is the light of the world who offers forgiveness from sin. Let’s look at our new key passage to learn how we can shine our light to others.”*

Using an inflatable beach ball, write instructions with a permanent marker in each section of the ball. Some examples are *Read the key passage together with a friend*, *Read the key passage like a robot*, *Read the key passage while standing on one foot*, etc. Lead the kids to stand in a circle and toss the beach ball to someone. Whoever catches it must complete the action under his or her left hand. Once complete, he or she will pass the ball to someone else. Continue play until everyone has had a turn.

Lead kids to sing “Shine (Matthew 5:16).” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

> **SAY** *“God, thank You for offering forgiveness for sin through Your Son, Jesus. Help our actions point friends, family, and others around us to Your amazing grace. Amen.”*

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**

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LOVE God by Applying the Story

1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles and display the New Testament Israel Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to Matthew 9. Explain that the city of Capernaum was where Jesus did much of His ministry In Galilee. Remind the kids that Jesus preached and performed many miracles in the city of Capernaum.

Consider pointing out the location of Capernaum [C6] on the New Testament Israel Map. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 9:2-6 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verses aloud.

> **SAY** *"Think about a time when you have been sick and didn't feel like getting out of bed. This paralyzed man was stuck in His bed, unable to walk, yet Jesus knew that the man had a much greater problem: he was a sinner. By first forgiving the man's sins, Jesus showed that His biggest concern is with our hearts. As the Gospel of Luke reminds us, Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). Like the paralyzed man, we are all sinners. But when we place our faith in Jesus, He forgives our sins and promises us eternal life with Him forever."*

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

> **SAY** *"Is sickness the result of sin in our lives?"*

Discuss how sickness is the result of sin coming into the world when the first humans, Adam and Eve, sinned. But that individual sin is not always the specific cause of someone's illness. Encourage kids to look forward to the day when Jesus will restore the new heaven and new earth, wiping away all sickness once and for all. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read John 9:2-3.)

> **SAY** *"Is Jesus' offer of forgiveness for everyone?"*

Share that we are all sinners. Jesus came to offer forgiveness for anyone who trusts in His name. Explain that when we place our faith in Jesus as Lord, He saves us and invites us into God's kingdom! (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Acts 10:43.)

> **SAY** *"How can you share about the good news of Jesus with others?"*

Remind kids that Jesus calls believers to share the truth about sin along with the good news of salvation with those around them. Challenge kids to think of someone in their life who needs to hear the gospel of Jesus. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Matthew 28:19.)

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**

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LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

☐ OPTION 1: TRADING PLACES

LOW PREP

Tape pieces of construction paper on the floor around the room, each about one foot from another piece. Place one more paper than number of kids playing. Lead each kid to stand on a piece of paper. Explain that they must all work to stand on another piece of paper, without stepping on the ground. To add more of a challenge, consider playing again and setting a timer.

> **SAY** *"Jesus offers something greater than just physical healing. He offers forgiveness. Similar to how you traded spaces with others on the papers, Jesus came to take the place of sinners and pay their penalty for sin. When we trust in Him, God also credits Jesus' righteousness to us."*

☐ OPTION 2: VERSES ABOUT FORGIVENESS

Lead kids to assemble in groups of three or four. Give each group a Bible and assign them a verse to look up on the topic of forgiveness. Here are some ideas: 1 John 1:9, Ephesians 1:7, Ephesians 4:32, Psalm 103:12, Romans 3:23, and Psalm 86:5. Encourage the groups to look up their verse and discuss what it teaches about forgiveness. Then, after a few minutes of small group discussion, allow the groups to share their verses and what they learned with the class.

> **SAY** *"By forgiving the man's sins, Jesus showed that He is God. Jesus has taken believers' sin upon Himself. He forgives everyone who repents and places their faith in Him!"*

2 REFLECTION AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper and pencil to each kid. Ask kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Who can I tell about this story?

Be sure to send the sheets home with the kids along with the activity pages so parents can continue to discuss the Bible story with their kids. If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page. Pray for your group.

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